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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (8/20): LACK OF MOVEMENT ON  
INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DIALOGUES

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Main Stories:  
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In a trio of articles leading its reporting, Al-Quds reports on a number of Israeli actions in Jerusalem. The top story reports that Israeli sources revealed on August 19 that Israeli authorities last week approved the implementation of a plan to establish 400 housing units on 80 dunums of land at the Neve Ya'cov settlement in East Jerusalem. The related two articles report on developments at the Al Aqsa compound. Al-Quds writes that Minister of Waqf and Religious Affairs, Sheikh Jamal Bawatneh, declared that the efforts made by Arab, Islamic and Palestinian to "rescue" the Maghrabi Gate are insufficient and that the Palestinian Authority, as well as the governments of Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, and other Arab and Islamic countries, should more strongly denounce Israeli actions at the Gate. Bawatneh's speech coincided with the 39th anniversary of the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Citing a WAFA report, Al Quds states that the Palestinian Prime Minister's Counselor for Jerusalem Affairs said that "high sensitivity" cameras were placed by the Israeli authorities at the Lion Gate's area in the Old City of Jerusalem on August 18 and called this a new violation of the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque. He added that the purpose of these cameras is to impose more restrictions on the entry of Muslim worshippers to Al-Aqsa Mosque, and noted that they were installed just before the holy month of Ramadan begins.

Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida lead with developments on the Palestinian national dialogue front. Al-Ayyam cites AFP and Reuters reports published in the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram that Egypt has invited the Palestinian factions to meet next week with Egyptian officials in Cairo to prepare for a comprehensive Palestinian dialogue. Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida report that the Palestinian factions will start arriving in Egypt as of Monday,

August 25. In related coverage in Al-Quds, the Hamas leader, Salah Al-Bradwil, denied that Hamas wants a country other than Egypt to mediate.

Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida highlight news about the visit of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to Saudi Arabia on August 19. The two dailies cite news agency reports that Abbas met with King Abdullah to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian cause and possibilities for cooperation between the two countries.

Al-Quds prints an interview with PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat previewing the upcoming visit by Secretary of State Rice to the Palestinian Territories. Erekat says Rice will arrive in the region on August 25 and will start her tour by meeting with the Palestinian Chief Negotiator Ahmed Qurei'a. He also tells the paper that the following day Rice will hold a meeting with the Israelis and the Palestinians at the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem, and then meet with President Abbas in Ramallah.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports news from AFP that the Israeli Defense Ministry announced on August 19 the closure of the borders between the Gaza Strip and Israel through August 21. This is in response to the firing of a rocket from Gaza into Israel, in violation of the Israel-Hamas truce agreed to on July 19.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida highlights news broadcasted on Israeli Radio that the meeting between the Israeli Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, and the Palestinian Chief Negotiator, Ahmed Qurei'a, on August 18 was successful.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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11. Independent Al-Quds runs a daily editorial entitled, "A Step in the Road to Releasing Thousands of Prisoners" (8/20): "Each Palestinian prisoner released by Israel reduces the burden and suffering of the Palestinian people in general and of the prisoner's friends and relatives in particular. ... [While] this step, even if it is symbolic ..., is important... [it] will not close the prisoners file ... or end the suspicions of the Palestinian people about the seriousness of the Israelis towards achieving a just peace ... What is requested is that the prisoner issue be given the concern it deserves in the negotiations with Israel ... [The continued imprisonment of thousands] ...deprives the Palestinian people of their efforts, creativity, and enthusiasm to build their homeland ..."

12. Independent Al-Ayyam runs a daily editorial by Hani Habib entitled, "Cairo's questions ... and 'Cheating' on the Answer Sheet!!" (8/20): "...[T]he Palestinian factions, the left wing and Islamic Jihad try their best to instill hope that an agreement between the Palestinian factions is imminent ... the release of [some] political prisoners by Hamas and Fatah paved the way to launching a dialogue, but they soon find reasons to close all doors of hope and things go back to the way they were ... it seems the factions do not tire of continuous efforts ... the questionnaire [which Egypt prepared for the Palestinian factions to answer before starting dialogue] is the best example of this... the Egyptian corrector of the questionnaire should not be surprised to see similar answers [from the factions]. [For example], the Hamas government refused the presence of Arab forces in the Gaza Strip, so did other factions. This similarity reveals "cheating". [Egypt] will find that cheating occurred in more than one question and answer. Cairo may hold direct talks to uncover the reasons and pretexts for these answers. Then, it will also realize that cheating [is occurring in] political speeches as well..."

WALLES